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**DONALD TRUMP'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON
TWITTER
BA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

Social media was utilized already in 2008 presidential campaign but it became central in the 2016 campaign. In the past, as well presidents have had to embrace and adapt to new technology which has had a lasting impact on political rhetoric. The Internet and social media are providing new ways for politicians to use to communicate with the general public. The aim of this thesis is to explore how political discourse has changed in history, specifically with the introduction of social media to political campaigning, and how Donald Trump uses social media as a tool for political communication.

The introduction discusses the term “Trump Effect” and why it is important to analyze Trump’s actions on social media. Chapter 1 explains what social media and Twitter is, and how new media is being used in political campaigns. It continues by providing an overview of the history of presidential rhetoric and the changes that have occurred in presidential rhetoric. Chapter 2 describes the method used (discourse-historical approach) to carry out the analysis that would determine the discourse strategies used by Trump, and discusses the findings. The conclusion summarizes the findings and discusses the implications.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2016 US presidential election was significant and unexpected in many ways, for example its ability to create strong divisions and populist anger. Another notable feature was the extensive use of social media during the campaign, especially by Donald Trump who chose to communicate through strong emotional outbursts on Twitter, as opposed to carefully constructed political speeches or interviews to traditional print media or TV channels. This active use of social media as the main channel for governing and shaping world opinion has continued after the election of Donald Trump. Since January 2017, when Donald Trump took the office as the 45th President of the United States, the world has kept a close eye on his and his administration's actions mostly because of his campaign promises and whether or not he was going to go through with them.

There has also been active interest in the ways in which Donald Trump uses Twitter. Millions worldwide are affected by what is now called the "Trump Effect" which is a term describing the influence Trump has had on society, economy, international relations, etc. Everything is included under it from the President's actions and his use of divisive and bullying rhetoric, to the administration's policies. Another aspect of the Trump Effect is that political opinions are no longer divided on the basis of political beliefs, like they used to be, but opinions about Trump. He has created a polarizing political reality that changes the previous political balance in the USA and the world (Korostelina 2017).

However, the Trump Effect started even before he won the election. His presidential campaign and his shocking rhetoric have left a mark in political discourse as well as society. Trump differs greatly from previous presidents. His use of grammar has been described as that of an 11-year-old (Independent 2016), while his rhetoric is believed to copy that of a dictator, because of its strategy of instilling fear (Time 2017). However, the central element of the Trump Effect is his domination of social media, more specifically Twitter, that is

believed to have played a significant part in him winning the 2016 presidential elections. (Johnson 2016: 79).

This is why this thesis will be dedicated to the analysis of Donald Trump's rhetoric on Twitter. The aim is to explore how political discourse has changed over time and how Donald Trump uses Twitter as a platform to maintain and express his political power. In order to achieve the aim, the literature review section will discuss Twitter as a platform for political communication and how the use of social media changes traditional political rhetoric. The empirical section will focus on Trump's discourse strategies and how he uses them to create positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation.

1. Political rhetoric and social media

1.1 What is Twitter?

Twitter is a social network site created in 2006 by Noah Glass, Jack Dorsey and Florian Weber, whose first idea was to create a system where sending a text to one number would broadcast the text to multiple people at once (Business Insider 2014). Now Twitter has over 330 million users worldwide (Statista 2017). User activity on the site can be called microblogging as the users write 140-character messages, called tweets, and share them with their followers. The idea was to mimic the length of SMS messages, which during that time were 160 characters. Twitter creators reserved the remaining 20 for the username. The limited character count made the social media platform popular because the 140-character limit makes people think through what they want to say and often witty and/or funny and/or smart short microposts are created.

However, there are also people who have been expressing their frustration with what Twitter calls “cramming your thought into a Tweet” (Twitter 2017a). In languages like Korean, Japanese and Chinese, one character conveys more information than in languages like English, Spanish, or French. Research conducted by Twitter (2017a) shows that 0.4% of Tweets in Japanese have 140 characters while in English 9% of Tweets hit that limit. Therefore, English-speaking users must edit their tweets by removing or shortening words in other words- to fit their thoughts into that limited space. In order to solve this problem, Twitter tweeted out in September 2016 that “photos, videos, GIFs, polls, and quote tweets no longer count toward your 140 characters” (Twitter Blog 2016). In a more drastic step, a year later Twitter announced that they will be doubling the character limit to 280 characters to solve the problem of “cramming” (Twitter Blog 2017b). It was an experimental move but it has been a successful one that has increased people’s engagement with Twitter. The

average tweet length has not changed but the ones that are longer than 140 characters are tweeted more often and more easily now (The Verge 2018).

Another way of expressing yourself on Twitter is through retweets. It means you repost another person's tweet on your timeline which is where the tweets from the accounts you follow appear (Twitter Help Center 2018a). This activity is mostly seen as sharing an opinion which may potentially take away from the diversity of opinions, while grouping people with the same mindset. It is also the fastest way to share some piece of information with your followers.

In addition to the present tweet length of 280 characters and retweets, there is one more important function that needs mentioning: hashtags. This function was created on Twitter as a grouping method. People add a relevant keyword or a phrase before the hashtag symbol (#), e.g. #blacklivesmatter, in their tweets which groups those tweets together making it easier for people to follow a topic. Hashtagged words often become very popular which in that case are included in Trending Topics (Twitter Help Center 2018b). These trending topics reveal what the users are talking about in real time which is one of the reasons Twitter has stayed relevant till this day.

Twitter has proven to be the quickest tool for reporting news. The event that proved Twitter as a real-time news source was when US Airways Flight 1549 made an emergency landing in the Hudson River in 2009. The first report was made just 32 minutes later by a rescuer, Jānis Krūms, who posted a picture of the plane with passenger on its wings, on Twitter. The post went viral because it was the first report of the event on any media channel and showed that Twitter had become the source of news because of its ability to react to and write about events before the more traditional media sources (Huffpost 2014; CNBC 2014).

A poll by Gallup (2017) reveals that only 27% of Americans having great deal or quite a lot of confidence in newspapers (the respective figures for TV and internet news are

24% and 16%). Trust in newspapers is lower than it was in the 1980s and 1990s when there were fewer alternative sources of information. Today, there are many other options in addition to traditional print media and people are indeed turning to alternative sources of information, one of which is Twitter.

Twitter is in many ways a perfect news source because of its real-time updates and because the hashtags help us to choose the content we are interested in. Pew Research Center (2017) conducted a survey which revealed that 67% of Americans get some of their news on social media, with 20% of them doing so often. The Center's study also showed that since 2013, at least half of Twitter users get their news on their site, and this share has climbed up to 74% in 2017. Twitter's news content partnership director Peter Greenberg also said in an interview given for Robert Andrews on Beet.TV (2017) that "Twitter has never been more influential or more relevant". He says that most of it is due to the present president because his tweets and people's reactions to them are what the most popular news stories are about. "Only on Twitter are you able to instantly find out what's going on in the world. The world turns to Twitter first to see what's going on (Beet.TV 2017)".

1.2 History of new media in political campaigns

The Internet had been used in political campaigns since 1992, starting with text-only websites and fundraising sites. The 2008 presidential campaign was unique because it was the first time that new media technologies and the Internet were used extensively and effectively by both Hillary Clinton and John McCain. However, it was Barack Obama who made use of the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies in a way that revolutionized campaigning (Hendricks et al 2010a: xii). Web 2.0 is "a second generation in the development of the World Wide Web, conceived as a combination of concepts, trends, and technologies that focus on user collaboration, sharing of user-generated content, and social networking

(Dictionary 2018)”. The first era of the World Wide Web (Web 1.0) enabled Internet users to only view the content that was posted online by the website makers, whereas now users can contribute to the online content. In addition, Web 2.0 offers tools for online communication in the form of social media sites and applications (TechTarget 2018). The Obama campaign utilized all types of new technology that had become available during the 2008 presidential campaign, including social media technologies such as Twitter, Facebook, My Space, Youtube, e-mail, blogs, etc. (Hendricks et al 2010b: 14).

Twitter was one of the many social network tools Obama used in his campaign. Obama used the social platform for two main functions, according to the research by Frederic I. Solop (2010). His analysis revealed that Obama’s campaign used Twitter to announce the location of the candidate at any moment and to promote the campaign website. This kept his supporters connected to the candidate and directed traffic to his site where people could also participate in crowdfunding by leaving small contributions to the campaign (Solop 2010: 41, 47). Obama’s successful online campaign urged other politicians to follow his lead and be more present on social media.

However, unlike Obama, Donald Trump decided to use social media to personally communicate with the public, something that the other candidates were afraid of doing. The past elections, however, have shown that embracing new technology and communication platforms is the key to success. While Hillary Clinton used a media team to run her social media accounts, Trump maintained his Twitter account and personally tweeted throughout his campaign. His unfiltered, off-the-cuff posts maintained the connection with his supporters and drew attention to him which in turn gained him free publicity on television and newspapers. It cannot be said that Trump’s campaign on Twitter is the sole reason for his win but dominating the social media definitely played a part in projecting his persona and his divisive views. The controversial side of Trump’s tweets generated extensive public

discussion which, again, increased attention to the candidate both from traditional media and the general public (Johnson 2016: 42, 77, 79). Tweets also changed the way in which we think about political rhetoric.

1.3 History of presidential rhetoric

Jeffrey K. Tulis (1987) divides the presidential rhetoric into the “old way” and “new way”. For him the “old way” means the period from the founding of the United States and can be characterized as extremely formal and controlled rhetoric. The founders established certain rules that the president had to adhere to because they were afraid of demagoguery. Demagoguery was thought to be one of the dangers of democracy. Because of majority rule and popular sovereignty that had been established, the founders created constraints in order to protect people from a manipulative demagogue (Tulis 1987: 29). This meant that the presidents were to serve the constitution and the presidents along with the founders thought the constitution required formality. Because of this, two prescriptions for presidential speech emerged. The first was that policy rhetoric should be written and addressed directly to Congress. Therefore, the speech would be completely political, leaving room for nothing else. Even though the addresses to Congress were available to all, they were not popular since they were not directed to the general public and were therefore difficult to understand. The second type of rhetoric was directed at the public, however, this also followed the rules of the constitution. For example, the proclamations and inaugural addresses informed the people about the presidential policy but avoided discussing the merits of the policy proposals (Tulis 1987: 46-47).

Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson made the presidential rhetoric more informal in early 20th century. Roosevelt responded to economic inequality and the threat of class warfare by consciously breaking from constitutional presidency. He did not intend for

the changes to stay put, however. Wilson, in turn, wanted to create a presidency that would respond to popular interests and needs (Muirhead 2017). As a result of these shifts, the 20th century saw constitutional presidency change into a rhetorical presidency. Presidents addressed the public more than the Congress, more emphasis was put on oral speeches than written messages, and these changes in turn made the argumentation more “inspirational”, “policy-oriented” and more developed (Tulis 1987: 138). 19th century speeches consisted of one sentence arguments or list of points but 20th century speeches contained paragraphs (Tulis 1987: 138). Because of Wilson and his legitimization of the president as a popular leader, his successors could embrace this new approach. Franklin Roosevelt took over radio broadcasts, Ronald Reagan dominated television (Muirhead 2017).

1.4 Changes in presidential rhetoric

Elvin T. Lim (2002) analyzed the inaugural addresses and annual presidential messages from 1789 and 2000 and identified the changes that have taken place in presidential rhetoric. During the past century, presidential rhetoric has de-intellectualized which has manifested itself in the substitution of formal words with more colloquial phrases. References to legal and judicial terms have decreased significantly and have been replaced with slang and casual references (Lim 2002: 333).

Since the nineteenth century, presidential rhetoric has also become more assertive. The first signs can be seen in the messages of Andrew Johnson and Lyndon Johnson, who were in office during times that needed responsibility and activism from the government. Since the Civil War, presidential rhetoric has become more compassionate and emotive which suggests that the relationship between the president and the public changed from one of authority to that of comradeship (Lim 2002: 335, 342-343).

Since the 1970s the presidential rhetoric has become more people oriented. Theodore Roosevelt addressed his annual message “To the Senate and House of Representatives”, Woodrow Wilson addressed it to the “Gentlemen of the Congress”, Ronald Reagan added to Wilson address “and fellow citizens”, and Bill Clinton added “my fellow Americans (Lim 2002: 339)”.

Presidential rhetoric has also become more intimate and more conversational, with the rhetor using the “language of you-and-I”, which can emphasize the distance between the president and the audience but it is more likely to help create a sense of affiliation between the two. Lastly, in the recent decades, presidential rhetoric has become more anecdotal with speeches including an increasing number of stories. (Lim 2002: 343-344) George W. Bushes speeches are one of the best examples of anecdotal and personal approach. His interactions with the audience reminds the actions of an entertainer and by doing that he averts the attention away from the main topic. His informality and interaction with his audience creates an image of a familiar leader which helps to create intimacy with his audience. It is a very different approach from Barack Obama’s speeches, who uses formality to portray himself as an expert of the topic. He avoids any interaction and presents the main topic right away following with a rational argumentation (Reyes 2014: 558-559).

Donald Trump’s style of communication shocked the world which contained outrageous threats (e.g., building a wall, immigrant deportation, locking up his political opponent). His discourse during his candidacy led many to underestimate him as a viable political candidate. However, a study by Ahmadian et al (2016) revealed that “a populist communication style – grandiose, dynamic, and informal -” [how Trump’s rhetoric is described] “may have ‘trumped’ a carefully seasoned platform” (Ahmadian et al 2016: 52). Using simple and colorful conversational language, he reached a larger audience and

appeared closer to them. This approach has become especially prominent in the presidential use of social media as Trump has continued to use the same methods after he was elected.

2. Donald Trump's tweets as a form of political rhetoric

2.1. Method

For my empirical analysis I collected Donald Trump's tweets (excluding retweets) from July 1, 2017 to August 3, 2017 using a website called Trump Twitter Archive, which collects and archives his tweets from his personal Twitter account, @realDonaldTrump. The data collection resulted in 241 tweets. I chose that particular time period because I aim to analyze his discourse after being sworn into office and before Twitter's character count changed from 140 to 280 on November 7, 2017. The one-month period produced a sufficient number of tweets for a study of this size. This thesis finds answers to following research questions:

1. What discourse strategies occur in Trump's tweets?
2. What is Trump's representation of himself and others?

For this thesis, a modified version of the discourse-historical approach (DHA) of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was applied (Reisigl 2017). I reread each tweet to gather information about the context of the tweets and researched the broader socio-political context of the tweets to figure out what event each tweet referred to. I then analyzed the discursive strategies described by Reisigl and Wodak (2000) to identify what strategies occur in Trump's tweets and then analyzed the occurring strategies to determine his representation of himself and others. In the examples below, I have used bold to draw attention to the strategies used. Because of the relative large number of tweets in the corpus, I will discuss examples that represent main strategies in detail, but show how they link to other tweets that rely on the same strategy.

2.2. Findings

2.2.1 Referential/nomination strategies and predication

Nomination is the “discursive construction of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions” (Reisigl 2017: 52). Trump uses this strategy to tarnish the other’s reputation in order to make himself look better. The most noteworthy occurrence of this phenomenon is Donald Trump’s popularization of the term “fake news”. Trump has been using this term to refer to news organizations who criticize him or that he disagrees with. He accuses them of sharing false information. This has been going on since the elections and I will just discuss one instance here. In Example 1, he uses the term to deny the stories of him having a “secret dinner” with Putin that had not been disclosed to the public. He goes on to add that the “press knew” which creates a sense that the press knowingly lied to the public and thus created fake news. He then goes on to add the term “fake news” to different news outlets. By blacklisting them like that, he is sharing his predication with his supporters (Example 2). This nomination strategy allows Trump to present himself in a heroic mode as the one person who is revealing the deceptive methods of the media.

Example 1: **Fake News** story of **secret dinner** with Putin is "sick." All G 20 leaders, and spouses, were invited by the Chancellor of Germany. **Press knew!**

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 18, 2017)

Example 2: Is **Fake News Washington Post** being used as a lobbyist weapon against Congress to keep Politicians from looking into Amazon no-tax monopoly?

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 24, 2017)

In a more serious instance of name-calling in Example 3, he goes on a Twitter rant where he describes the news media “fake and fraudulent”, adding deception to what he perceives to be the wrongdoings of the media. He continues by saying how he beat “fake news” by winning the election. He is making the media seem like a bigger threat in order to make his win more significant and important. He also includes his supporters in the victory by using “we”, saying that thanks to his supporters they are able to defeat the supposedly hostile and deceptive media.

Example 3: The **FAKE & FRAUDULENT NEWS MEDIA** is working hard to convince Republicans and others I should not use social media - but remember, I won....

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 1, 2017)

....the 2016 election with interviews, speeches and social media. I had to beat #FakeNews, and did. **We** will continue to WIN!

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 1, 2017)

Before the Trump presidency and the 2016 elections “fake news” strictly meant “false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media (Cambridge Dictionary)”. During the elections Trump started to use the term to describe the news articles and networks that he simply did not like. In Example 1, Trump calls the reports about him having a “secret dinner” with Putin at the G-20 summit meeting in Hamburg, Germany a “Fake News story”. The truth is that it was never reported as a “secret dinner” but a “private conversation” that was not planned, therefore surprising the other guests who later told the media (FactCheck 2017b). In other words, Trump takes the moderately phrased and fact-based news report, distorts it to say something that was not stated in the original and, in the third move, calls that now indeed misleading story fake news, without disclosing that it is

his own exaggeration that makes the news false. This taking out of context and reformulation is a discursive strategy that can be seen across the whole corpus and it forms the core of the use of nomination by Trump.

Trump is known for the extensive use of nicknames he gave to the other candidates during the elections. For example, he gave senator Ted Cruz the nickname “Lyin Ted” referring to Cruz being caught lying multiple times during the campaign. He called former Florida Governor Jeb Bush “Low energy Jeb” because to him he seemed to lack vitality or drive. He also referred to Ohio Governor John Kasich as “1 for 38” because Kasich won only one state in the primary elections (Fox News 2018). One of the most famous nicknames is “Crooked Hillary”, the name that alludes to Hillary’s controversial email scandal. The core of the nomination by nickname is to take one aspect of the candidate’s CV out of context, give it a short or catchy negative slant, and to spread it through repetition. The persistent repetition of the misleading negative information helps to associate Trump’s opponents with negative features. Even after being sworn in as President, Trump has kept on using these nicknames as shown in Example 4.

Example 4: My son Donald openly gave his e-mails to the media & authorities whereas **Crooked Hillary Clinton** deleted (& acid washed) her 33,000 e-mails!

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 22, 2017)

Trump also uses other referential styles that clearly show his attitude. After North Korea launched another missile Trump turned to Twitter to express his thoughts on the matter. In Example 5 he calls the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, “this guy”, which shows that he does not take him seriously and sees him as someone below him. In this discursive strategy, Trump does not create a new dismissive label like in Example 4, but just

belittles his opponent by using an undifferentiated generic reference. He also calls the North Korea's missile launches "nonsense", which projects his confidence about his superiority and control over the situation. His nonchalant discourse regarding the missile threat is meant to assure the public that there is nothing to worry about.

Example 5: North Korea has just launched another missile. Does **this guy** have anything better to do with his life? Hard to believe that South Korea.....

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 3, 2017)

....and Japan will put up with this much longer. Perhaps China will put a heavy move on North Korea and end this **nonsense** once and for all! (@realDonaldTrump, Jul 3, 2017)

2.2.2 *Argumentation*

Trump's argumentation is full of fallacies the aim of which is to paint himself as the victim of "Fake News", urge politicians to do his bidding and to present himself as the president who, using his words, made America great again. In Example 6, he accuses "Fake News Media" of not covering him when he represents America well nor his accomplishments. With this he is arousing sympathy in his supporters by assuming that even if his intentions are good the "Fake News" will still cover Trump in a way that does not agree with his version of reality, even though the news are reporting facts. The target of this particular accusation is indirect, but shows Trump's persistent discursive strategy of aggressively attacking his opponents, with no specific reasons or arguments, but using strong language that presents himself in a positive light and helps create a sense in his target audience that the president is being unfairly attacked and hence increases distrust in traditional media institutions.

Example 6: I will represent our country well and fight for its interests! Fake News Media will never cover me accurately but who cares! We will #MAGA [Make America Great Again]!

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 7, 2017)

At the end of the tweet he exclaims that he does not care about the “Fake News”, although that statement seems a bit contradictory to his previous actions. For example, in an earlier tweet (Example 7) he speculated whether the “Fake News Media” would write about his accomplishments or not. In addition, he is constantly tweeting about the unfair treatment he is receiving from the “Fake News Media”. The very number of tweets (18 in the present corpus) where he complains about not being recognized by traditional media outlets suggests that he cares very much about the image respectable news sources create about him. We can see it again in Example 7 where Trump’s need for praise is linked to his dominant nomination of traditional media as Fake News Media:

Example 7: Dow hit a new intraday all-time high! I wonder whether or not the Fake News Media will so report?

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 3, 2017)

Trump has been very vocal on Twitter on his disappointment with the Republicans who voted against the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, popularly known as Obamacare. In Example 8 he accuses the Republicans who voted against the repeal of betraying him by going behind his back. What could be a political disagreement is here reformulated into personal betrayal of the president. That is, in this view, the politicians of the president’s party owe total allegiance to the president and do not have the right to political dissent. This

profoundly anti-democratic vision that goes against the American political tradition is, however, formulated in a language that is seeking to gain the sympathy of the public by rallying them behind a supposedly abandoned and betrayed president. What more, Trump claims that the Republican politicians owe personal gratitude to him because they could not have won their seats without Trump victory, a claim that is not true in many cases where Trump's divisiveness lost Republican seats.

Example 8: It's very sad that Republicans, even some that were carried over the line on my back, do very little to protect their President. (@realDonaldTrump, Jul 23, 2017)

He changes his tone in the next tweet (Example 9) by threatening the Republicans with repercussions even he cannot name. He clearly states his thoughts on Obamacare by calling it “disastrous,” ignoring the facts that show the popularity of the act and its positive effects on people's health outcomes, and states the actions he expects the Republicans will follow. It is clear that he is using his influence on Twitter to get the Republicans to do his bidding.

Example 9: If Republicans don't Repeal and Replace the disastrous ObamaCare, the repercussions will be far greater than any of them understand!

(@realDonaldTrump, Jul 23, 2017)

What is interesting in this example is not just the misrepresentation of the Affordable Care Act, but also the use of very emphatic rhetoric (the epithet “disastrous”) but also reliance on ominous unarticulated consequences that allow readers to conjure up their own worst fears. Here, too, like in the previous example, we see a suggestion that loyalty to the

President is the duty of all members of his party, that is, an implicitly authoritarian approach to political leadership.

To further strengthen the link between Trump the person and Trump presidency, he is constantly tweeting about his accomplishments as a President. In Example 10, he tweets about the numbers of businesses and jobs growing, saying it “doesn’t just happen” referring to him having to put in work and effort to get these results. However, he does not mention that when he was sworn into office the economy had been experiencing a steady job growth for 75 straight months (FactCheck 2017a). He is giving himself credit for the work done by President Obama who oversaw transition from recession to economic growth during his presidency. Attributing other people’s accomplishments to himself is a visible strategy in Trump tweets.

Example 10: Business is looking better than ever with business enthusiasm at record levels. Stock Market at an all-time high. **That doesn't just happen!**

(@realDonaldTrump, Aug 3, 2017)

I am continuing to get rid of costly and unnecessary regulations. Much work left to do but effect will be great! Business & jobs will grow. (@realDonaldTrump, Aug 3, 2017)

2.2.3 Intensification/mitigation

Trump ended his rant about “fraudulent news media” in Example 3, by tweeting “#FraudNewsCNN #FNN” with a meme of him beating up CNN with footage from his wrestling career. This violent meme visualises his win over “fake news” and at the same time shows off his personal physical power, shown in an act of masculine aggression,

making him seem unbeatable. This form of intensification has been very characteristic of Trump's rhetoric in general.

Trump's tweeted meme of him beating up CNN caused outrage among the public and politicians who argued that it is unacceptable for a President to share a post that condones violence. However, Trump's homeland security adviser, Tom Bossert, defended Trump on ABC News (2017) that Trump has every right to respond to the beating he gets from the TV channels and hence no one would take it as a threat. There seem to be more people who agree that it was un-presidential of him to tweet the image. Trump's own response to the criticism demonstrates that he consciously chose the intensifying image: "My use of social media is not Presidential - it's MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL. Make America Great Again! (@realDonaldTrump, Jul 1, 2017)".

In other words, Trump argues that he is seeking to redefine what is meant by presidential rhetoric and, through that, presidency itself. The focus is not on rational argumentation over laws, like in the past, but personal appeal to the public, using different intensification strategies for a greater emotional appeal. Other methods of intensification used are, for example, capitalization like in Example 11, where he capitalizes adverb "never" to emphasize the rarity of the situation and that what he has been doing is paying off.

Example 11: "Corporations have **NEVER** made as much money as they are making now."

Thank you Stuart Varney @foxandfriends Jobs are starting to roar,watch!

(@realDonaldTrump, Aug 1, 2017)

CONCLUSION

The beginning of rhetorical presidency can be traced down to the early 20th century when Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson broke away from the constitutional presidency to accommodate the new needs of society and the availability of new communication technologies. Presidents have after that embraced all the new advances in technology from radio to television which has increased their ability to address the public more directly and also to appeal to the public. The presidents also had to change their rhetoric on the level of language and information choice in order to accommodate the level of understanding of the general public. This resulted in the rhetoric becoming more colloquial, intimate and assertive.

The era of internet and social media revolutionised the way politicians run their campaigns and communicate with their supporters. Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign utilized all types of social media enabling him to connect with his supporters in a more personal way. Obama's successful online campaign made other politicians follow his lead. Donald Trump took using social media to another level by personally managing his own Twitter account. Trump's controversial tweets created a public discussion which garnered him coverage on traditional media. His domination on social media definitely played a part in his success and one part of it was his rhetoric which changed the way we think of political discourse.

The empirical analysis of a corpus of Trump's tweets in the present thesis shows that he relies on a number of strategies regularly in his tweets. Trump mainly uses nomination strategies to present himself in a positive way by either criticizing news organizations for sharing what he calls "fake news" or using derogatory nicknames that attribute negative features to his opponents. The nomination strategy is the easiest way to create positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The excessive use of this strategy by Trump

shows that he is unable to criticise his opponents in a more meaningfully intellectual way, by engaging arguments, not just with their personal attributes.

Trump uses argumentation fallacies to paint himself as victim of “fake news” and to arouse sympathy in his supporters. In addition, his argumentation reveals contradiction when he claims he does not care about “fake media” coverage but the number of tweets of him complaining about it tells otherwise. Trump’s argumentation is also anti-democratic as politicians whose political opinions differ from Trump, are accused of betrayal of the president and not argued with, to demonstrate that Trump’s stand is more reasonable. Rational argumentation with opponents is missing from the corpus analysed. This is a concerning strategy by Trump that is a threat to democracy.

Intensification is another strategy that is very characteristic of Trump’s rhetoric in general. His tweet containing a meme of him beating up a CNN has caused public outrage, with people accusing him of condoning violence. In response, he called himself a “modern day president” which raises the worrisome possibility that he seeks to reformulate the meaning of presidency and presidential rhetoric in a substantive manner.

The results of analysing the small corpus of President Trump’s tweets demonstrates that what scholars have identified as the Trump Effect can indeed be seen here. The president in this corpus creates a divisive political reality in which the most important feature is not one’s political beliefs, but one’s attitude towards the president. Trump actively promotes this view in his tweets, raising serious questions about the future of political argumentation and thus also for democratic leadership.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Kristina Piksar
Donald Trump's Political Discourse on Twitter
BA thesis
Donald Trumpi poliitiline diskursus Twitteris
bakalaurusetöö
2018
Lehekülgede arv: 27

Käesoleva bakalaurusetöö eesmärk on uurida kuidas poliitiline diskursus on muutunud seoses sotsiaalmeedia arenguga ning millist retoorikat kasutab Donald Trump Twitteris. Töö on jaotatud kaheks osaks. Esimeses peatükis kirjeldatakse muudatusi poliitilise retoorika ajaloos ning selgitatakse kuidas on sotsiaalmeedia seda mõjutanud. Teine peatükk sisaldab Donald Trumpi tweetide analüüsi, milleks on kasutatud Martin Reisigli ja Ruth Wodaki arendatud diskursus-ajaloolise lähenemise (*discourse-historical approach*) ühte aspekti, nimelt enda ja teiste kujutamise strateegiate analüüsi. Analüüsist selgub, et Trumpi peamised strateegiad enda positiivselt kujutamiseks ja vastaste negatiivselt kujutamiseks on nimetamine, vigane argumentatsioon ja intensiivistamine.

Märksõnad: inglise keel, poliitiline diskursuseanalüüs, sotsiaalmeedia diskursus, ameerika poliitiline retoorika

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

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